

The Nature and Manifestations of Arrogance

Introduction: The Divisions of Arrogance

The human heart, like an unkempt garden, harbors weeds that threaten to overrun its sanctity if left unchecked. Among these vices, arrogance—referred to in Arabic as **تكبر**—is a particularly pernicious weed, dividing itself into various categories:

1. **Arrogance Toward Subordinates**
2. **Arrogance Toward Society at Large**—whether to the weak or the strong.
3. **Arrogance Toward the Saints of God**, scholars, and the clergy.

4. **Arrogance Toward the Pure Imams**

(عليهم السلام), the Prophet Muhammad

(صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم), and his teachings.

5. **Arrogance Toward God Himself.**

Each of these manifestations stems from the "Pharaonic spirit" present in all of us—a spirit that must be uprooted and replaced with the seeds of humility.

The Roots of the "Pharaonic Spirit"

It is said that the Pharaoh of Egypt, who dared to claim divinity, began his journey as a simple potter. Observing the chaos and disarray in society, he seized opportunities to rise through the ranks, becoming a king and, eventually, a self-proclaimed god. This tale serves as a parable:

arrogance starts small, festering unnoticed until circumstances provide fertile ground for its bloom.

If arrogance toward subordinates—be it through scorn, harshness, or disdain—is left unchecked, it evolves into arrogance toward peers and society. Such a person, emboldened, may even challenge authority, spirituality, and ultimately, divine truth.

The Struggle Against Arrogance

The Long Road to Eradication

Eradicating arrogance is no simple task; it requires persistent struggle. As the eminent Imam Khomeini once remarked, it may take چهل سال ("forty years of focus") and much "blood,

sweat, and tears" to uproot this vice entirely. Even those who seem outwardly humble may fall prey to arrogance when faced with power or wealth.

Humility as the Antidote

To replace the tree of arrogance with the tree of humility requires sustained effort. When cultivated, humility bears fruit—fruits that nourish the soul and foster harmony with others.

The Dangers of Arrogance

A Parable of the Greedy

History provides examples of those corrupted by arrogance, like ثعلبة in the time of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم). Initially a man of modest means,

ثعلبة received wealth through the Prophet's generosity. Yet, as his riches grew, so did his arrogance. When called upon to give zakat (charity), his attachment to wealth overpowered his sense of gratitude and duty. He ultimately refused, fell into apostasy, and was condemned.

Arrogance in Scholars and Leaders

Even learned individuals may fall victim to arrogance. A person who has memorized a few terms or earned a following may begin to disparage others, including scholars and clerics. As one example illustrates, individuals who study in the West and acquire a superficial understanding of philosophy or science may consider themselves superior to religious authorities, dismissing centuries of Islamic scholarship. A student of PHD in philosophy in

USA said arrogantly to me that Allama Tabatabai and Murtaza Mutahari does not know modern philosophy at all.

This arrogance not only alienates them from truth but also leads them to undermine the very foundations of their community and faith.

The Ethical Teachings of the Qur'an and Tradition

Lessons from **وليد بن مغيرة**

The Qur'an recounts the story of **وليد بن مغيرة**, a man who initially recognized the divine beauty of the Qur'an. He famously admitted, " **إِنَّ لَهُ لَحَلَاوَةً** " ("Indeed, it is sweet and graceful, and it prevails without being

surpassed"). Yet, when his peers appealed to his arrogance, he rejected the truth, labeling the Prophet a sorcerer to protect his social standing. This story, as recounted in Surah Al-Muddaththir (74:18–25), demonstrates the destructive power of arrogance, even when one is faced with undeniable truth.

Practical Reflections

The Symbolism of Modesty

Imam Sajjad (عليه السلام) famously critiqued those who use their attire or status as a means of arrogance. A turban or robe, he observed, is nothing more than fabric unless accompanied by genuine humility. It is only when one uproots

the vice of arrogance that such symbols might become a "crown of angels."

The Lives of the Truly Humble

Consider the late scholar حاج آقا رضای همدانی, who, despite his brilliance in jurisprudence, chose to live modestly. Refusing positions of authority, he earned his livelihood through humble work as a quilt-maker. His humility, paired with his scholarship, stands in stark contrast to those who seek power or recognition through ostentation.

Conclusion: The War Within

Arrogance is a universal vice, a seed present in every heart. As the Qur'an warns and the sages echo, it must be uprooted through persistent effort, lest it grow to overshadow the virtues of

the soul. In the words of the wise, " شترش در خانه " ("Its camel rests at our very doorstep"). Therefore, let us begin the battle within ourselves, lest we become the very Pharaohs we condemn.

May Allah Bless Mohammad and his purified Family.

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